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Seventy-third session
Item 38 of the provisional agenda*
The situation in the Middle East

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report contains replies received in response to the note verbale by the Secretary-General dated 4 May 2018 concerning implementation of the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions 72/15, entitled "Jerusalem", and 72/16, entitled "The Syrian Golan".

* A/73/150.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 72/15 and 72/16. In its resolution 72/15, the Assembly stressed that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of the City of Jerusalem should take into account the legitimate concerns of both the Palestinian and Israeli sides and should include internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion and of conscience of its inhabitants, as well as permanent, free and unhindered access to the holy places by people of all religions and nationalities. In its resolution 72/16, which deals with the Syrian Golan, the Assembly demanded once more that Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

2. On 4 May, in order to fulfil my reporting responsibility under resolutions 72/15 and 72/16, I addressed notes verbales to the Permanent Representative of Israel, the Permanent Representatives of all other Member States and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations requesting them to inform me of any steps that their Governments had taken or envisaged taking concerning implementation of the relevant provisions of those resolutions. As at 1 August 2018, replies had been received from Lebanon, Mexico, the Philippines and the State of Palestine. The replies are provided in section II of the present report.

II. Replies received

Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]

As part of its efforts to implement the resolutions of the General Assembly on the item "The situation in the Middle East", Lebanon has taken the following steps:

- Lebanon has categorically rejected America's illegal step of declaring Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel. It has called on Washington to desist and comply with the relevant authoritative international resolutions.
- On 9 December 2017, the Lebanese Parliament adopted recommendations stating that America's decision concerning Jerusalem posed a threat to international peace and security and provided cover for the Israeli occupation, its aggressive stance, its settlement activities and all of its violations of international laws and humanitarian laws.
- On 9 December 2017, at an extraordinary meeting of the League of Arab States, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates urged States members to take all of the necessary legal and diplomatic measures to ensure that Palestine was recognized as a State with full membership in the United Nations, with Jerusalem as its capital, and to take countermeasures against the American decision and any similar decision by any other State to transfer its embassy to Jerusalem. Such measures should begin with diplomatic action, followed by political measures and culminating in economic and financial sanctions. Lebanon has, accordingly, postponed its periodic political consultations with those States that have adopted ambiguous positions on the issue.
- On 13 December 2017, at an extraordinary meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the President of the Republic urged member States to carry out a diplomatic campaign to increase the number of States that recognize the State of Palestine, press for it to become a full Member of the United Nations,

and take the necessary legal, political and diplomatic actions to recognize East Jerusalem as its capital.

- On the same date, at the same meeting, he called for concerted, progressive diplomatic and economic sanctions against any State opting to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.
- In regional and international forums, Lebanon has emphasized that it remains committed to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative in all its aspects without exceptions, including a two-State solution on the 1967 borders and a just solution to the issue of the Palestine refugees.
- Lebanon supported the Arab resolution submitted to the Security Council by Egypt on 18 December 2017, which provides that any decisions and actions which purport to have altered the character, status or demographic composition of Jerusalem have no legal effect.
- Lebanon supported the draft General Assembly resolution entitled "Status of Jerusalem", which was submitted by Yemen and Turkey on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation on 19 December 2017 and provides that the legal status of Jerusalem under the authoritative international resolutions must be protected, and that all measures to the contrary are void.
- On 17 May 2018, Lebanon filed a complaint against Israel with the International Criminal Court in the wake of Israel's massacre in Gaza and other parts of Palestine. The Israeli occupation army acted in cold blood against defenceless demonstrators who had come out peacefully to protest against the transfer of the American embassy to Jerusalem. The massacre is a flagrant and protracted violation of the principles of international humanitarian law. It claimed 62 Palestinian lives and injured dozens more. Lebanon called on the Court to take immediate action against Israel in order to demonstrate its own credibility and ability to effectively enforce the principle of accountability.

Mexico

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Mexico supports a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict based on the existence of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and internationally recognized borders in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

Moreover, Mexico adheres to the resolutions adopted by both the Security Council and the General Assembly on these issues, in particular Security Council resolutions 478 (1980), of 20 August 1980, and 497 (1981), of 17 December 1981, concerning the status of the City of Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, respectively.

The Government of Mexico has emphatically rejected the continued expansion of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in the territory of the Syrian Golan.

With regard to the position of Mexico on the status of Jerusalem, Mexico published press release No. 459 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico on 6 December 2017, which explains the following:

Following the decision of the Government of the United States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel, the Government of Mexico, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reports that it will maintain its embassy in Tel Aviv, as has been the case until now by all countries that maintain diplomatic relations with Israel, in accordance with Security Council resolution 478 (1980), as well as relevant

resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, on the status of the City of Jerusalem.

Mexico will continue to maintain a close and friendly bilateral relationship with the State of Israel, as evidenced by the recent visit of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to our country, and it will also continue to support the historical claims of the Palestinian people.

Mexico reiterates its firm conviction that a political and peaceful solution to the conflict must take place through direct negotiations, without preconditions, between the parties, that resolve the substantive issues, including the final status of Jerusalem.

Mexico supports dialogue as the means to settle the conflict between Israel and Palestine, based on the two-State solution, which includes the right of Israel and Palestine to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders, as agreed in the Oslo Accords and endorsed by various Security Council resolutions.

Philippines

[Original: English]

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Philippines to the United Nations has the honour to convey the following information for the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions under agenda item 37, "The situation in the Middle East", adopted by the Assembly on 30 November 2017:

- Resolution 72/15 ("Jerusalem"): The Philippines has not recognized the legality of Israel's claims over Jerusalem and continues to advocate a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the status of Jerusalem to be decided in direct talks between the two parties in the final stages of the negotiations.
- Resolution 72/16 ("The Syrian Golan"): The Philippines has not recognized the legality of Israel's occupation and de facto annexation of the Golan Heights.

The Philippine Mission has the further honour to convey that, under General Assembly resolution 72/24 ("Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East", adopted by the Assembly on 11 December 2017), the Philippines has been strongly supportive of the establishment of the zone as a means to reduce tensions in the Middle East and to protect Philippine nationals in the region from the threat of nuclear war as well as the use of other weapons of mass destruction. The Philippines remains supportive of the Conference on the zone.

State of Palestine

[Original: English]

The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations has the honour to convey the State of Palestine's views on, and efforts to implement, General Assembly resolution 72/15, entitled "Jerusalem", as well as on relevant developments since its adoption.

Since the onset of the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem and attempts by the occupying Power to annex the city from 1980 onward, the international community has repeatedly reaffirmed its rejection of unlawful Israeli practices and policies in the City, against its Palestinian inhabitants and in the broader context of its now 51-year foreign occupation of the rest of the Palestinian Territory occupied in 1967. The demands for cessation of all Israeli measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character, identity and status of the City, in violation of international

law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including, inter alia, Security Council resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016), have been unequivocal and are central to the prevailing international consensus on the matter.

The General Assembly has maintained this position across the decades, reaffirming it again at its seventy-second session in resolution 72/15, "Jerusalem". This resolution, adopted by overwhelming majority support, presents the clear stance of the General Assembly regarding the question of the City of Jerusalem, one that is principled, consistent and firmly rooted in the applicable provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions as well as the July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

The adoption of resolution 72/15 coincided with the passage of over 50 years since the onset of Israel's foreign occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands in 1967, and the commemoration of other solemn anniversaries, including 70 years since the General Assembly's decision to partition Mandate Palestine by its resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 and the ensuing Nakba in 1948, underscoring the protracted nature of this injustice against the Palestinian people and the lack of a political horizon to bring an end to the Israeli occupation and to peacefully resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The gravity of this injustice and the cyclical failure of peace efforts was further starkly highlighted just days later by the declaration made on 6 December 2017 by the United States President, recognizing Jerusalem as the so-called "capital of Israel" and deciding to transfer the United States embassy to the City, in contravention of Security Council resolutions, international law, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and the established international consensus on the City, whereby there is no recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the City as a whole and whereby Israel remains the occupying Power in East Jerusalem. Following the veto cast in the Security Council on 18 December 2017 on a draft resolution presented by the delegation of Egypt to reaffirm the Council's long-standing position on the status of Jerusalem, the General Assembly rightly undertook its responsibilities with the adoption of its resolution ES-10/19, "Status of Jerusalem", reaffirming its relevant resolutions, including resolution 72/15, as well as those of the Security Council, and reinforcing the global rejection of Israel's illegal measures and the United States decision in this regard.

Even prior to the United States decision, resolution 72/15 reaffirmed the Assembly's decades-long "determination that any actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Holy City of Jerusalem are illegal and therefore null and void and have no validity whatsoever" and called on Israel "to immediately cease all such illegal and unilateral measures". This includes the so-called "Basic Law" on Jerusalem adopted by the Israeli Government in 1980, deemed by both the Council and the Assembly as "null and void" and to be "rescinded forthwith".

This year, Israel escalated such brazen illegality with the Knesset's approval of an amendment to the "Basic Law", requiring a supermajority of 80 of the 120 Knesset members to approve any proposal to return any part of the City, making it harder for any future Israeli Government to comply with international law and United Nations resolutions by ceding its illegal control over East Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Palestine, in any peace deal. This is yet another blow to the prospect of salvaging the already battered two-State solution on the 1967 lines and ensuring the rights and legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to freedom and independence in their State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Resolution 72/15 also appropriately recalled Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). Resolution 2334 (2016) continues to reflect the international community's

long-established stance regarding the requirements for a just and lasting solution to the conflict, including as regards Jerusalem. This resolution, in line with prior relevant resolutions, reaffirmed the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, underlined that the Council will not recognize "any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations", and called upon all States "to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967".

The State of Palestine continues its efforts to uphold and implement resolution 2334 (2016) in its entirety, alongside all other relevant United Nations resolutions, and continues its call on all States and organizations to abide by the provisions of the resolution in order to exact consequences for the continuation of the occupation aimed at bringing it to an end and advancing the prospects for a just peace. On the other hand, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to disregard these resolutions, systematically and deliberately violating all provisions and escalating the illegal practices that resolution 72/15 and other relevant resolutions specifically call for the cessation of. In fact, in Jerusalem, Israel persists with the same unlawful policies it has pursued since the onset of its occupation of the City in 1967, in its attempts to forcibly alter the demography and legal status of the City, to negate its Arab identity and cultural heritage, including its Muslim and Christian history and character, and to suffocate the existence of the Palestinian population in the City.

Israeli officials continue to inflame tensions by inciting religious hatred and strife, routinely making provocative declarations regarding Al-Haram Al-Sharif and claims to Israeli sovereignty over the entirety of the City of Jerusalem, the Old City and its holy sites included. This makes more imperative the insistence by all concerned parties that Israel respect the historic status quo at Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's custodianship of the Muslim and Christian holy places in the City, and that it halt actions contrary to the decades-long arrangements at these sensitive religious sites.

Equally urgent is a halt to all illegal, repressive Israeli measures targeting the indigenous Palestinian population of the City and aiming to replace them with Israel's Jewish population, along with measures to sever and isolate the City from its natural Palestinian environs in the rest of the West Bank and entrench Israel's control over the eastern part of the City. This continues to be pursued by the occupying Power through, inter alia, construction and expansion of illegal settlements and the Wall and its associated regime and transfer of thousands of Israeli settlers to East Jerusalem, in addition to the demolition of Palestinian homes, revocation of residency rights and eviction of thousands of Palestinian families, despite international condemnation and demands for cessation.

In this regard, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has reported that "Palestinians in East Jerusalem are subject to a coercive environment with the risk of forcible transfer due to Israeli policies such as home demolitions, forced evictions and revocation of residency status. As is the case in Area C, a restrictive and discriminatory planning regime makes it virtually impossible for Palestinians to obtain the requisite Israeli building permits: only 13 per cent of East Jerusalem is zoned for Palestinian construction and much of this is already built-up. Palestinians who build without permits face the risk of home demolition and other penalties, including costly fines, the payment of which does not exempt the owner from the requirement to obtain a building permit. At least a third of all Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack an Israeli-issued building permit, potentially placing over 100,000 residents at risk of displacement". Moreover, Israeli settlers continue to pose a threat as they routinely intimidate and terrorize Palestinians in East Jerusalem, seeking, inter alia, to expel them from their homes and land.

As all such illegal actions persist, it is obvious that the United States Government's decision on Jerusalem on 6 December 2017 has further encouraged Israel's impunity in East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In fact, the occupying Power has been particularly emboldened to carry on with its illegal, destructive behaviour following the United States embassy move to Jerusalem on 14 May 2018. This move was taken in direct violation of Security Council resolutions 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016), General Assembly resolutions on Jerusalem, and the Charter prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force, and in total disregard of the regional and international appeals to prevent such a move, including appeals by the Palestinian leadership to the United States Government to respect United Nations resolutions and Palestinian legitimate rights, aspirations and sensitivities in this regard.

Repeated warnings by Palestine and the international community of the consequences of this United States decision have, regrettably, been to no avail. It is to be recalled that, on the day of the United States embassy transfer, Israeli occupying forces killed more than 60 Palestinians and injured over 2,800 other civilians who were protesting this provocative move in the context of the weeks-long peaceful civilian protests — the "Great March of Return" — against Israel's illegal occupation, oppression and dispossession of the Palestinian people. Tragically, since the protests began on 30 March 2018, more than 140 Palestinians, including 19 children, have been killed and more than 15,200 civilians injured by the occupying forces.

As the United States decision in support of Israel's illegal manoeuvres in Jerusalem has further fuelled its impunity, we remain insistent in our calls for respect for international and all relevant United Nations resolutions. We remain convinced that international law is key to rectifying this situation and ending the injustice against our people, and remain committed to all peaceful, political and legal means to this end.

Thus, Palestine has acted strictly within the parameters of the law and diplomacy in response to this crisis. This began with a letter to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council on 6 December 2017, urging immediate international action. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, the Council convened an emergency session on 8 December, with delegation after delegation denouncing the United States decision on Jerusalem; reaffirming their adherence to the relevant resolutions, including, inter alia, resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016); calling for compliance by all parties; and rejecting measures to the contrary as "null and void". A draft resolution on the matter was presented by Egypt, as the Arab representative on the Council, yet was vetoed by the United States on 18 December 2017. However, the unanimous support of the other 14 Council members reflected and reaffirmed the prevailing international consensus regarding Jerusalem based on the applicable rules of international law and relevant resolutions.

In view of the Council's paralysis and the gravity of the matter, a joint request was made by Yemen, as Chair of the Group of Arab States, and Turkey, as Chair of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Summit, to the President of the General Assembly to resume the tenth emergency special session in a further effort to diplomatically and legally address this critical issue. The Assembly thus convened on 21 December, and resolution ES-10/19 was adopted by an overwhelming majority, reaffirming relevant resolutions; reiterating the call upon all States to refrain from establishing diplomatic missions in the Holy City of Jerusalem, pursuant to resolution 478 (1980) of the Security Council; and stressing that Jerusalem is a final status issue to be resolved through negotiations in line with relevant United Nations resolutions.

It was hoped that the broad support for this resolution would reinforce the strong messages from capitals all over the world to the United States rejecting such a violation and dissuading other countries from following suit. It is thus deeply regrettable that the United States did not suspend this decision and instead transferred its embassy to Jerusalem on 14 May and that Guatemala and Paraguay have also violated the principles and provisions enshrined in the applicable resolutions.

Persisting in the attempts to address the issue of Jerusalem, deteriorating conditions on the ground and the deepening political deadlock, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas addressed the Security Council on 20 February to directly appeal to it to uphold its responsibilities and to present a "Palestinian peace plan", calling, inter alia, for an international peace conference based on United Nations resolutions and including the Palestinian and Israeli sides along with concerned regional and international parties, similar to the Paris Peace Conference or the Moscow conference called for by Council resolution 1850 (2008). It was an earnest attempt to salvage the remaining prospects for realizing the two-State solution on the 1967 lines through a multilateral approach long called for by the Palestinian leadership on the basis of international law and the internationally endorsed parameters of a just solution: the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map.

In contrast, following the United States decision on Jerusalem, Israel escalated its unlawful colonization activities, advancing plans for thousands of settlement units, especially in and around East Jerusalem, and for various infrastructure projects intended to connect the illegal settlements to Israel, further severing and isolating East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, further damaging the two-State solution and obstructing peace efforts. Additionally, right-wing Knesset members, including members of the Israeli government coalition, continued to advance political proposals and draft laws aimed at "legalizing" settlement outposts and changing the boundaries of Jerusalem. We recall the statement in this regard issued by Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, on 7 February, that "The Secretary-General deeply regrets the adoption of the so-called 'Regularization bill' on 6 February by the Knesset. This bill is in contravention of international law and will have far-reaching legal consequences for Israel. It reportedly provides immunity to settlements and outposts in the occupied West Bank that were built on privately owned Palestinian land."

Israel has also continued to violate the historic status quo at Jerusalem's holy places despite fact that, in resolution 72/15, the General Assembly made a clear call "for respect for the historic status quo at the holy places of Jerusalem, including the Haram al-Sharif, in word and practice" and urged "all sides to work immediately and cooperatively to defuse tensions and halt all provocations, incitement and violence at the holy sites in the City". Tensions remain high owing to repeated provocations and incitement by Israeli officials and illegal settlers against our holy sites and the right of the Palestinian people, Muslims and Christians, to worship in Occupied East Jerusalem, in absolute contempt for international law and the will of the international community. In this regard, the statement by Israeli Minister Miri Regev that "This land has a connection with only one people — the Jewish people" is echoed repeatedly by other officials, in addition to extremist calls by other Israelis to take over Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

Seeking to uphold resolution 72/15, the State of Palestine has also persistently highlighted the grave issues facing Jerusalem in its official interventions in the General Assembly and the Security Council and in the context of its official letters to the Secretary-General and the Presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly, drawing international attention to the perils of this fragile situation in Jerusalem. It has repeatedly cautioned about the far-reaching consequences of any

further destabilization, including the stoking of a religious conflict. It has also continued to garner support for the Palestinian inhabitants of the City and for the preservation of the cultural and religious heritage in Jerusalem, including through the support of the OIC and the Islamic Development Bank. Moreover, it has worked, in cooperation with the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the OIC, to convene annual conferences on Jerusalem, bringing together diplomats, scholars, civil society and media to address the prevailing situation in all its dimensions and to consider joint solutions based on the law and international responsibilities.

All such efforts continue to be undertaken despite Israel's systematic obstruction of access by the Palestinian Government to the City and obstruction of Palestinian development in the City, which has exacerbated fragile economic and social conditions, especially affecting the youth population. In this regard, we underscore the fact that numerous official Palestinian cultural, social and political institutions in Jerusalem, including Orient House, remain closed by order of the occupying Power, in violation of Security Council resolution 1515 (2003). Since 1967, Israel has shut down more than 120 Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem, 88 of which have been closed permanently.

Given the worsening political, economic, social and humanitarian situation on the ground; the shrinking space for the exercise of the Palestinian right to self-determination in East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory; and the absence of a political horizon, we must underscore the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine, including the question of the City of Jerusalem, which holds unique historical, religious, cultural and political dimensions, until it is satisfactorily and justly resolved in all aspects on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The United Nations must play a more substantive role, including through the use of the Secretary-General's good offices and the work of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and inject some hope in what seems like a hopeless situation. Of course, the Security Council and the General Assembly must remain at the forefront of the efforts to ensure that international law is upheld and United Nations resolutions are implemented, with the aim of ending this injustice and fulfilling the rights of the Palestinian people, including to East Jerusalem as the capital of their State of Palestine.

We urge international mobilization of the means and political will necessary to advance these objectives, underscoring that — no matter the unilateral, illegal measures taken by Israel or any other State in our land, which are null and void and without any legal effect — only an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, and the full realization of Palestinian rights, including to freedom and independence, can lead to a just and lasting solution to the conflict. Serious, practical efforts must be made, in line with resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980), 2334 (2016), 72/15 and all other relevant resolutions, to convey a firm message to Israel that, after more than a half-century of occupation, this illegal and unjust situation will no longer be tolerated and that it cannot persist with its occupation and colonization of Jerusalem and of the rest of the Palestinian territory it has occupied since 1967 without consequence.

We continue to call for, and stand ready to cooperate with, responsible and genuine multilateral efforts towards ensuring Israel's complete withdrawal from the Palestinian territory occupied since June 1967, including East Jerusalem; the achievement of the two-State solution of an independent, sovereign, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with

Israel in peace and security within recognized borders based on the pre-1967 borders; and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including a just solution for the Palestine refugees based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Despite the many crises and challenges faced at the moment, the Palestinian leadership has remained and will continue to remain committed to a peaceful and just solution and calls on the international community to uphold its obligations and commitments to do what it can to salvage any glimmer of hope for a just peace.

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Syrian Arab Republic

[Original: Arabic]

From the time that Israel occupied the Syrian Golan in 1967, the international community has reiterated that it rejects that occupation and has demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, withdraw from the entire occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. In its resolution 72/16 of 30 November 2017, entitled "The Syrian Golan", the General Assembly demands once more that Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, in implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions. In resolution 72/88 of 7 December 2017, entitled "The Occupied Syrian Golan", the General Assembly also calls on Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions on the occupied Syrian Golan, in particular Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council, inter alia, decided that the Israeli decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its laws,

jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void and without any legal effect whatsoever. The General Assembly also demands that Israel should rescind forthwith its decision.

The Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan has persisted for more than 51 years. During that time, the United Nations has time and again adopted resolutions in which Israel is called upon to end its occupation of the Syrian Golan, its unremitting repression of Syrian civilians suffering under colonial occupation and its blatant, unchecked violation of international instruments and norms. Nevertheless, Israel continues to turn its back on United Nations resolutions and international law, and continues to occupy the Syrian Golan, in flagrant violation of international instruments and treaties and international law thanks to the protection from accountability provided by certain Security Council members.

The Syrian Government categorically rejects the decision of Israel, the occupying Power, to hold elections for so-called local councils in the occupied Syrian Golan. It strongly condemns that decision, which violates international law and is contrary to international instruments and norms. The Government reiterates that our people in the Golan reject that decision, which they consider to be a blatant affront to their national values and sense of belonging to their motherland, Syria. The people of the Golan expressed their rejection of that illegal Israeli decision in their statement of 11 July 2017.

Recently, Israel has added a new chapter to the annals of its racist and terrorist acts by providing direct, ongoing logistical support to armed terrorist groups, the most prominent of which is the Nusrah Front, a group that is on the Security Council list of terrorist entities. The armed terrorist groups are using the area of separation as a haven after the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) withdrew from its positions following the abduction of some of its troops by those groups. What is more, Israel has repeatedly committed acts of direct military aggression against the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic in support of the terrorists, in flagrant violation of the separation of forces agreement and of international law.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic denounces the settlement policies that are being implemented by Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan without any regard for the relevant Security Council, General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions. In its resolutions, the General Assembly reaffirms the illegality of Israeli settlement building and other activities in the occupied Syrian Golan and renews its call on Israel to desist from changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan and, in particular, to desist from establishing settlements. The General Assembly has called on Israel to desist from its continuous building of settlements.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic condemns all Israeli practices and actions aimed at controlling the natural resources of the occupied Syrian Golan and the systematic looting of those resources by Israel, the occupying Power, in flagrant violation of the principle of the permanent sovereignty of peoples under foreign occupation over their natural resources, Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and the General Assembly resolution entitled "Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources". Israel continues to deplete the natural resources of the occupied Syrian Golan and deprive the territory's Syrian population of the ability to benefit from their natural resources, including water. The Israeli occupiers deliberately waste those resources or allow only Israeli settlers to utilize them. Israel has also cleared land adjacent to the ceasefire line in the occupied Syrian Golan and cut down trees. The Israeli occupation authorities have also diverted water from Mas'adah Lake in the occupied Syrian

Golan to Israeli settlements. That Israeli action, which is contrary to international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, has created an economic and environmental catastrophe of enormous proportions for Syrian nationals in the occupied Syrian Golan that has caused them to incur significant material losses. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also warns of the threat posed by the occupying Israeli authorities' decision to authorize the United States company Genie Energy to drill for oil in the occupied Syrian Golan, in flagrant violation of international law, international humanitarian law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and United Nations resolutions

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns the funding by the European Union of a survey on "alternative tourism" to promote tourism in Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan. The funding was announced at conference held at the so-called Marom Golan settlement, near the two destroyed Syrian villages of Bab al-Hawa and Muwaysah. More than 100 tourism experts and advisers took part in an exchange of ideas and views on how to promote tourism in the occupied Syrian Golan. These developments are a clear and flagrant violation of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again calls upon the States members of the European Union and the States Members of the United Nations to refuse, in accordance with their obligations under international law, to import natural or manufactured products from the occupied territories.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that the Israeli occupation forces' policy of arbitrary detention and sham trials is part of a catalogue of Israeli crimes and human rights violations against Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan stretching back over the more than five decades that Israel has occupied the Syrian Golan. It calls on international bodies to pressure Israel, the occupying Power, for the immediate and unconditional release of the Syrian prisoner Sidqi al-Miqt, the Mandela of Syria, and the imprisoned youth Amal Abu Salih.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Human Rights Council, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and all human rights organizations to pressure Israel, the occupying Power, to guarantee a healthy environment for Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan, particularly in view of Israeli practices that destroy the environment. Israel has buried nuclear waste in the occupied Syrian Golan, specifically at the foot of Jabal al-Shaykh, in containers with a thirty-year life expectancy that are not secure and prone to cracking, and the radioactive contents of which can seep into soil and groundwater. That exposes Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan to the risk of cancer, and deaths from cancer now account for 30 per cent of all deaths.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also emphasizes that the above-mentioned international bodies must pressure Israel to cease taking peremptory decisions prohibiting citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan from visiting their Syrian homeland via the Qunaytirah crossing. Those arbitrary Israeli measures contravene the Geneva Conventions and other international norms and instruments. They serve only to increase the material, mental and physical suffering of Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan beyond all legal and moral bounds. The suffering of our people in the occupied Syrian Golan has also been exacerbated by the fact that the Qunaytirah crossing is controlled by the Nusrah Front and other armed terrorist organizations, with direct support from the Israeli occupation forces. One of the effects of that situation has been to prevent students in the occupied Syrian Golan from crossing into their Syrian homeland to pursue university studies.

Lastly, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that, in order to ensure stability in the Middle East and preserve the credibility of the United Nations, measures must be taken to implement all international resolutions aimed at ending the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the Syrian Arab Golan, and compelling Israel to withdraw to the line of 4 June 1967, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including, in particular, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 497 (1981) and 2334 (2016).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic affirms its support for General Assembly resolution 72/15, entitled "Jerusalem", and calls on the international community to pressure Israel to halt its attempts to Judaize Jerusalem and revoke all its baseless legislative and administrative measures aimed at changing the city's legal status and identity. It also calls for serious and effective steps to be taken to stop the unlawful practices of Israel against the Palestinian people in Jerusalem, above all settlement-building activities and practices that undermine the city's holy sites.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic condemns the decision of the United States of America to move its embassy to the occupied city of Jerusalem and recognize it as the capital of the Israeli occupying authorities. Those decisions are fundamentally contrary to the legal, political and historical status of Jerusalem, and are merely another act in the rape of Palestine, the displacement of its people and the establishment of an occupying colonial entity on its territory. Moreover, those decisions constitute a flagrant violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions in which Israel is called upon to withdraw from the territories that it occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem. The above-mentioned decisions are therefore simply unilateral actions that have no legitimacy or impact on the legal status of Jerusalem.

The Syrian Arab Republic adheres to its principled position of supporting the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish its independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, on the entirety of its national territory. We also support the right of return of Palestinian refugees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

Achieving a just and comprehensive peace requires implementation of United Nations resolutions aimed at ending the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including, in particular, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 497 (1981) and 2334 (2016). Moreover, in order to achieve peace, Israel must be compelled to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories to the line of 4 June 1967, and a Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, must be established.

State of Palestine

[Original: English]

The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations has the honour to convey the State of Palestine's views on, and efforts to implement, General Assembly resolution 72/15, entitled "Jerusalem", as well as on relevant developments since its adoption.

Since the onset of the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem and attempts by the occupying Power to annex the city from 1980 onward, the international community has repeatedly reaffirmed its rejection of unlawful Israeli practices and policies in the City, against its Palestinian inhabitants and in the broader context of its now 51-year foreign occupation of the rest of the Palestinian Territory occupied in 1967. The demands for cessation of all Israeli measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character, identity and status of the City, in violation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including, inter alia, Security

Council resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016), have been unequivocal and are central to the prevailing international consensus on the matter.

The General Assembly has maintained this position across the decades, reaffirming it again at its seventy-second session in resolution 72/15, "Jerusalem". This resolution, adopted by overwhelming majority support, presents the clear stance of the General Assembly regarding the question of the City of Jerusalem, one that is principled, consistent and firmly rooted in the applicable provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions as well as the July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

The adoption of resolution 72/15 coincided with the passage of over 50 years since the onset of Israel's foreign occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands in 1967, and the commemoration of other solemn anniversaries, including 70 years since the General Assembly's decision to partition Mandate Palestine by its resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 and the ensuing Nakba in 1948, underscoring the protracted nature of this injustice against the Palestinian people and the lack of a political horizon to bring an end to the Israeli occupation and to peacefully resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The gravity of this injustice and the cyclical failure of peace efforts was further starkly highlighted just days later by the declaration made on 6 December 2017 by the United States President, recognizing Jerusalem as the so-called "capital of Israel" and deciding to transfer the United States embassy to the City, in contravention of Security Council resolutions, international law, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and the established international consensus on the City, whereby there is no recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the City as a whole and whereby Israel remains the occupying Power in East Jerusalem. Following the veto cast in the Security Council on 18 December 2017 on a draft resolution presented by the delegation of Egypt to reaffirm the Council's long-standing position on the status of Jerusalem, the General Assembly rightly undertook its responsibilities with the adoption of its resolution ES-10/19, "Status of Jerusalem", reaffirming its relevant resolutions, including resolution 72/15, as well as those of the Security Council, and reinforcing the global rejection of Israel's illegal measures and the United States decision in this regard.

Even prior to the United States decision, resolution 72/15 reaffirmed the Assembly's decades-long "determination that any actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Holy City of Jerusalem are illegal and therefore null and void and have no validity whatsoever" and called on Israel "to immediately cease all such illegal and unilateral measures". This includes the so-called "Basic Law" on Jerusalem adopted by the Israeli Government in 1980, deemed by both the Council and the Assembly as "null and void" and to be "rescinded forthwith".

This year, Israel escalated such brazen illegality with the Knesset's approval of an amendment to the "Basic Law", requiring a supermajority of 80 of the 120 Knesset members to approve any proposal to return any part of the City, making it harder for any future Israeli Government to comply with international law and United Nations resolutions by ceding its illegal control over East Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Palestine, in any peace deal. This is yet another blow to the prospect of salvaging the already battered two-State solution on the 1967 lines and ensuring the rights and legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to freedom and independence in their State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Resolution 72/15 also appropriately recalled Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). Resolution 2334 (2016) continues to reflect the international community's long-established stance regarding the requirements for a just and lasting solution to

the conflict, including as regards Jerusalem. This resolution, in line with prior relevant resolutions, reaffirmed the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, underlined that the Council will not recognize "any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations", and called upon all States "to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967".

The State of Palestine continues its efforts to uphold and implement resolution 2334 (2016) in its entirety, alongside all other relevant United Nations resolutions, and continues its call on all States and organizations to abide by the provisions of the resolution in order to exact consequences for the continuation of the occupation aimed at bringing it to an end and advancing the prospects for a just peace. On the other hand, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to disregard these resolutions, systematically and deliberately violating all provisions and escalating the illegal practices that resolution 72/15 and other relevant resolutions specifically call for the cessation of. In fact, in Jerusalem, Israel persists with the same unlawful policies it has pursued since the onset of its occupation of the City in 1967, in its attempts to forcibly alter the demography and legal status of the City, to negate its Arab identity and cultural heritage, including its Muslim and Christian history and character, and to suffocate the existence of the Palestinian population in the City.

Israeli officials continue to inflame tensions by inciting religious hatred and strife, routinely making provocative declarations regarding Al-Haram Al-Sharif and claims to Israeli sovereignty over the entirety of the City of Jerusalem, the Old City and its holy sites included. This makes more imperative the insistence by all concerned parties that Israel respect the historic status quo at Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's custodianship of the Muslim and Christian holy places in the City, and that it halt actions contrary to the decades-long arrangements at these sensitive religious sites.

Equally urgent is a halt to all illegal, repressive Israeli measures targeting the indigenous Palestinian population of the City and aiming to replace them with Israel's Jewish population, along with measures to sever and isolate the City from its natural Palestinian environs in the rest of the West Bank and entrench Israel's control over the eastern part of the City. This continues to be pursued by the occupying Power through, inter alia, construction and expansion of illegal settlements and the Wall and its associated regime and transfer of thousands of Israeli settlers to East Jerusalem, in addition to the demolition of Palestinian homes, revocation of residency rights and eviction of thousands of Palestinian families, despite international condemnation and demands for cessation.

In this regard, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has reported that "Palestinians in East Jerusalem are subject to a coercive environment with the risk of forcible transfer due to Israeli policies such as home demolitions, forced evictions and revocation of residency status. As is the case in Area C, a restrictive and discriminatory planning regime makes it virtually impossible for Palestinians to obtain the requisite Israeli building permits: only 13 per cent of East Jerusalem is zoned for Palestinian construction and much of this is already built-up. Palestinians who build without permits face the risk of home demolition and other penalties, including costly fines, the payment of which does not exempt the owner from the requirement to obtain a building permit. At least a third of all Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem lack an Israeli-issued building permit, potentially placing over 100,000 residents at risk of displacement". Moreover, Israeli settlers continue to pose a threat as they routinely intimidate and terrorize Palestinians in East Jerusalem, seeking, inter alia, to expel them from their homes and land.

As all such illegal actions persist, it is obvious that the United States Government's decision on Jerusalem on 6 December 2017 has further encouraged Israel's impunity in East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In fact, the occupying Power has been particularly emboldened to carry on with its illegal, destructive behaviour following the United States embassy move to Jerusalem on 14 May 2018. This move was taken in direct violation of Security Council resolutions 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016), General Assembly resolutions on Jerusalem, and the Charter prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force, and in total disregard of the regional and international appeals to prevent such a move, including appeals by the Palestinian leadership to the United States Government to respect United Nations resolutions and Palestinian legitimate rights, aspirations and sensitivities in this regard.

Repeated warnings by Palestine and the international community of the consequences of this United States decision have, regrettably, been to no avail. It is to be recalled that, on the day of the United States embassy transfer, Israeli occupying forces killed more than 60 Palestinians and injured over 2,800 other civilians who were protesting this provocative move in the context of the weeks-long peaceful civilian protests — the "Great March of Return" — against Israel's illegal occupation, oppression and dispossession of the Palestinian people. Tragically, since the protests began on 30 March 2018, more than 140 Palestinians, including 19 children, have been killed and more than 15,200 civilians injured by the occupying forces.

As the United States decision in support of Israel's illegal manoeuvres in Jerusalem has further fuelled its impunity, we remain insistent in our calls for respect for international and all relevant United Nations resolutions. We remain convinced that international law is key to rectifying this situation and ending the injustice against our people, and remain committed to all peaceful, political and legal means to this end.

Thus, Palestine has acted strictly within the parameters of the law and diplomacy in response to this crisis. This began with a letter to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council on 6 December 2017, urging immediate international action. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, the Council convened an emergency session on 8 December, with delegation after delegation denouncing the United States decision on Jerusalem; reaffirming their adherence to the relevant resolutions, including, inter alia, resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980) and 2334 (2016); calling for compliance by all parties; and rejecting measures to the contrary as "null and void". A draft resolution on the matter was presented by Egypt, as the Arab representative on the Council, yet was vetoed by the United States on 18 December 2017. However, the unanimous support of the other 14 Council members reflected and reaffirmed the prevailing international consensus regarding Jerusalem based on the applicable rules of international law and relevant resolutions.

In view of the Council's paralysis and the gravity of the matter, a joint request was made by Yemen, as Chair of the Group of Arab States, and Turkey, as Chair of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Summit, to the President of the General Assembly to resume the tenth emergency special session in a further effort to diplomatically and legally address this critical issue. The Assembly thus convened on 21 December, and resolution ES-10/19 was adopted by an overwhelming majority, reaffirming relevant resolutions; reiterating the call upon all States to refrain from establishing diplomatic missions in the Holy City of Jerusalem, pursuant to resolution 478 (1980) of the Security Council; and stressing that Jerusalem is a final status issue to be resolved through negotiations in line with relevant United Nations resolutions.

It was hoped that the broad support for this resolution would reinforce the strong messages from capitals all over the world to the United States rejecting such a violation and dissuading other countries from following suit. It is thus deeply regrettable that the United States did not suspend this decision and instead transferred its embassy to Jerusalem on 14 May and that Guatemala and Paraguay have also violated the principles and provisions enshrined in the applicable resolutions.

Persisting in the attempts to address the issue of Jerusalem, deteriorating conditions on the ground and the deepening political deadlock, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas addressed the Security Council on 20 February to directly appeal to it to uphold its responsibilities and to present a "Palestinian peace plan", calling, inter alia, for an international peace conference based on United Nations resolutions and including the Palestinian and Israeli sides along with concerned regional and international parties, similar to the Paris Peace Conference or the Moscow conference called for by Council resolution 1850 (2008). It was an earnest attempt to salvage the remaining prospects for realizing the two-State solution on the 1967 lines through a multilateral approach long called for by the Palestinian leadership on the basis of international law and the internationally endorsed parameters of a just solution: the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map.

In contrast, following the United States decision on Jerusalem, Israel escalated its unlawful colonization activities, advancing plans for thousands of settlement units, especially in and around East Jerusalem, and for various infrastructure projects intended to connect the illegal settlements to Israel, further severing and isolating East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, further damaging the two-State solution and obstructing peace efforts. Additionally, right-wing Knesset members, including members of the Israeli government coalition, continued to advance political proposals and draft laws aimed at "legalizing" settlement outposts and changing the boundaries of Jerusalem. We recall the statement in this regard issued by Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, on 7 February, that "The Secretary-General deeply regrets the adoption of the so-called 'Regularization bill' on 6 February by the Knesset. This bill is in contravention of international law and will have far-reaching legal consequences for Israel. It reportedly provides immunity to settlements and outposts in the occupied West Bank that were built on privately owned Palestinian land."

Israel has also continued to violate the historic status quo at Jerusalem's holy places despite fact that, in resolution 72/15, the General Assembly made a clear call "for respect for the historic status quo at the holy places of Jerusalem, including the Haram al-Sharif, in word and practice" and urged "all sides to work immediately and cooperatively to defuse tensions and halt all provocations, incitement and violence at the holy sites in the City". Tensions remain high owing to repeated provocations and incitement by Israeli officials and illegal settlers against our holy sites and the right of the Palestinian people, Muslims and Christians, to worship in Occupied East Jerusalem, in absolute contempt for international law and the will of the international community. In this regard, the statement by Israeli Minister Miri Regev that "This land has a connection with only one people — the Jewish people" is echoed repeatedly by other officials, in addition to extremist calls by other Israelis to take over Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

Seeking to uphold resolution 72/15, the State of Palestine has also persistently highlighted the grave issues facing Jerusalem in its official interventions in the General Assembly and the Security Council and in the context of its official letters to the Secretary-General and the Presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly, drawing international attention to the perils of this fragile situation in Jerusalem. It has repeatedly cautioned about the far-reaching consequences of any

further destabilization, including the stoking of a religious conflict. It has also continued to garner support for the Palestinian inhabitants of the City and for the preservation of the cultural and religious heritage in Jerusalem, including through the support of the OIC and the Islamic Development Bank. Moreover, it has worked, in cooperation with the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the OIC, to convene annual conferences on Jerusalem, bringing together diplomats, scholars, civil society and media to address the prevailing situation in all its dimensions and to consider joint solutions based on the law and international responsibilities.

All such efforts continue to be undertaken despite Israel's systematic obstruction of access by the Palestinian Government to the City and obstruction of Palestinian development in the City, which has exacerbated fragile economic and social conditions, especially affecting the youth population. In this regard, we underscore the fact that numerous official Palestinian cultural, social and political institutions in Jerusalem, including Orient House, remain closed by order of the occupying Power, in violation of Security Council resolution 1515 (2003). Since 1967, Israel has shut down more than 120 Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem, 88 of which have been closed permanently.

Given the worsening political, economic, social and humanitarian situation on the ground; the shrinking space for the exercise of the Palestinian right to self-determination in East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory; and the absence of a political horizon, we must underscore the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine, including the question of the City of Jerusalem, which holds unique historical, religious, cultural and political dimensions, until it is satisfactorily and justly resolved in all aspects on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The United Nations must play a more substantive role, including through the use of the Secretary-General's good offices and the work of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and inject some hope in what seems like a hopeless situation. Of course, the Security Council and the General Assembly must remain at the forefront of the efforts to ensure that international law is upheld and United Nations resolutions are implemented, with the aim of ending this injustice and fulfilling the rights of the Palestinian people, including to East Jerusalem as the capital of their State of Palestine.

We urge international mobilization of the means and political will necessary to advance these objectives, underscoring that — no matter the unilateral, illegal measures taken by Israel or any other State in our land, which are null and void and without any legal effect — only an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, and the full realization of Palestinian rights, including to freedom and independence, can lead to a just and lasting solution to the conflict. Serious, practical efforts must be made, in line with resolutions 476 (1980), 478 (1980), 2334 (2016), 72/15 and all other relevant resolutions, to convey a firm message to Israel that, after more than a half-century of occupation, this illegal and unjust situation will no longer be tolerated and that it cannot persist with its occupation and colonization of Jerusalem and of the rest of the Palestinian territory it has occupied since 1967 without consequence.

We continue to call for, and stand ready to cooperate with, responsible and genuine multilateral efforts towards ensuring Israel's complete withdrawal from the Palestinian territory occupied since June 1967, including East Jerusalem; the achievement of the two-State solution of an independent, sovereign, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with

Israel in peace and security within recognized borders based on the pre-1967 borders; and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including a just solution for the Palestine refugees based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Despite the many crises and challenges faced at the moment, the Palestinian leadership has remained and will continue to remain committed to a peaceful and just solution and calls on the international community to uphold its obligations and commitments to do what it can to salvage any glimmer of hope for a just peace.

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Item 54 of the provisional agenda*
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/83. On 4 May 2018, the Secretary-General sent notes verbale to all Member States and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, drawing their attention to the relevant provisions of resolutions 72/80, 72/81, 72/82 and 72/83 and requesting that they submit information by 5 July 2018 concerning any action they had taken or envisaged in relation to the implementation of those resolutions. In response to the requests contained in paragraph 4 of resolution 72/80, paragraph 4 of resolution 72/81, paragraphs 37 and 38 of resolution 72/82 and paragraph 4 of resolution 72/83, the Assembly received information from India, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and the State of Palestine. The full texts of the replies are reproduced in the present report.

* A/73/150.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 72/83, on Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues.

2. On 4 May 2018, the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to all Member States, as well as to the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, drawing their attention to the relevant provisions of resolutions 72/80, 72/81, 72/82 and 72/83 and requesting them to send information to him by 5 July 2018 on any actions they had taken or envisaged in relation to the implementation of those resolutions.

II. Replies received from Member States

India

[Original: English]
[1 June 2018]

The Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations in New York presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, with reference to its note verbale dated 4 May 2018, has the honour to report that the Government of India contributes to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), inter alia, in the ways below.

India has always been supportive of UNRWA efforts to secure sufficient, adequate and predictable resources for the duration of its mandate. Against the backdrop of the serious resource constraints faced by UNRWA, the Government of India has increased its annual financial contribution five-fold to the UNRWA core budget, from US$ 1 million in 2016 to US$ 5 million in 2018. The enhanced contribution to UNRWA was announced during the UNRWA Extraordinary Ministerial Conference, held in March 2018.

As part of its ongoing assistance programmes in Palestine to strengthen capacity-building efforts focused on institutions, services and training personnel, the Government of India provides 150 places for Palestinians every year in its Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme. India also provides 100 scholarships to meritorious students under the General Scholarship Scheme of the Indian Council of Cultural Relationship. Those programmes are also available to Palestinian refugees. The Government of India started an annual Youth Exchange Programme with Palestine in 2017. Prime Minister Modi, during his visit to Palestine in February 2018, announced that the annual number of young people who took part in the programme had doubled, from 50 to 100. Palestine refugees also participate in the Youth Exchange Programme.

In addition, during the last five years, under an India-Palestine development partnership, 17 agreements have been signed in the fields of agriculture, health care, information technology, youth affairs, consular affairs, women's empowerment and media. Under those agreements, around US$ 70 million of financial support and project assistance has been offered for projects like post-2014 war reconstruction efforts in Gaza; the construction of five schools; the India-Palestine Centre of Excellence for Informational and Communication Technologies at the Al-Quds University, with a satellite centre in Ramallah; the India-Palestine Techno-park in Ramallah; a 100-bed super specialty hospital in Bethlehem; the post of India Studies Chair at the Al-Quds University; the construction of the Palestine Institute of Diplomacy in Ramallah; a National Printing Press; and establishing a Heritage Centre for the Empowerment of Women and Young People.

Israel

[Original: English]
[12 July 2018]

The Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to his note concerning General Assembly resolutions 72/80, 72/81, 72/82 and 72/83 adopted by the Assembly on 7 December 2017, under the agenda item "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East".

Israel decided, once again, to vote against those resolutions due to the political motivation that stands behind them and the fact that they represented a one-sided view which fails to reflect the reality on the ground.

I would like to emphasize the underlying position of Israel regarding UNRWA, as was envisaged by Prime Minister Netanyahu at the start of the Israeli Cabinet meeting on 7 January 2018: "UNRWA is an organization that perpetuates the Palestinian refugee problem. It also perpetuates the narrative of the right of return, as it were, in order to eliminate the State of Israel; therefore, UNRWA needs to pass from the world. This is an agency that was established 70 years ago, only for the Palestinian refugees, at a time when the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) deals with global refugee problems. Of course, this creates a situation in which there are great-grandchildren of refugees, who are not refugees but who are cared for by UNRWA, and another 70 years will pass and those great-grandchildren will have great-grandchildren and therefore, this absurdity needs to stop".

Furthermore, the Prime Minister presented the way forward: "UNRWA support funds need to be gradually shifted to UNHCR, with clear criteria for supporting genuine refugees, not fictitious refugees, as happens today under UNRWA. I have brought this position to the attention of the United States of America. This is how to rid the world of UNRWA and deal with genuine refugee problems, to the extent that such remain".

Prime Minister Netanyahu's remarks touch upon the fundamental issue of the Agency's definition of "refugee", which goes far beyond the accepted international definitions and criteria for refugees. Rather than narrowing the problem in order to solve it, the Agency's flexible definition has widened it, with refugee status now applying to the fourth generation of Palestinians, dramatically increasing the number of registered refugees from an estimated 700,000 back in 1949 (UNRWA claim) to more than 5,000,000.

By perpetuating Palestinian refugees' status, instead of finding durable solutions to eliminate their refugee status, UNRWA demonstrates that it is part of the problem and not part of the solution. Moreover, the perpetuation of their refugee status and the Palestinian "refugee" narrative amounts to support of only one solution: the return of 5 million Palestinians to Israeli territory, an objective Israel rejects categorically because it undermines the prospects to reach a peace agreement for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and threatens the character of Israel as the world's only Jewish State.

Israel remains deeply concerned regarding the Agency's persistent and cynical use of humanitarian funding for the purpose of advocacy, which runs contrary to the efforts to achieve a political solution. It is unacceptable for a United Nations agency to actively support a biased narrative about the conflict in the region, while utilizing the refugee situation as the primary means of achieving this goal. UNRWA should stick to its original humanitarian mandate while refraining from one-sided politicized advocacy.

Another grave concern arose during the past year as UNRWA spokesperson Chris Gunness admitted, once again, in October 2017, that UNRWA had exposed a tunnel under one of its schools in Gaza. This was the second tunnel that UNRWA had discovered in a period of a couple of months. According to the announcement: "UNRWA robustly intervened with relevant parties to protest the violation of the sanctity and disrespect of the neutrality of United Nations premises. The presence of a tunnel underneath an UNRWA installation ... is unacceptable. It places children and Agency staff at risk, and UNRWA demands full respect for the neutrality and inviolability of United Nations premises at all times".

The discovery of a second terror tunnel, operating directly under the classrooms of children, is not an isolated incident, but rather part of Hamas' systematic effort to exploit the organs of the United Nations. However, UNRWA deliberately chooses to omit any direct mention of Hamas' responsibility and of its common practice to misuse United Nations and civilian infrastructure. It is of utmost importance to ensure that all United Nations-affiliated agencies, and especially UNRWA, remain neutral and safeguarded from abuse by terrorist organizations.

Furthermore, in the past months, Israel has faced a series of provocative, premeditated mass confrontations along the security fence between Gaza Strip and Israel. The Palestinian leadership insisted that these demonstrations were peaceful. However, these riots have centred on violence and placed innocent people, both Israeli and Palestinian, in grave danger. Hamas terrorists, hiding behind women and children being exploited as human shields, have burned tires on the fence, thrown Molotov cocktails, planted explosive devices and even attempted to forcibly breach the fence and infiltrate Israeli territory. Twice, extremely violent Palestinian rioters penetrated the Palestinian side of the Kerem Shalom crossing, causing major damage to the fuel terminal and conveyer and thus harming the sole lifeline of the Gaza Strip. Not only that, but protesters keep sending on a daily basis flaming kites over the fence, spreading forest fires across the southern agricultural lands of Israel, threatening human lives, causing severe environmental damage and creating a heavy economic toll.

Despite the reality on the ground, we have seen time and time again UNRWA public statements and tweets exempting Hamas of its responsibility and lacking condemnation of the main role of Hamas in these events. Moreover, UNRWA policies only encourage Hamas to keep using civilians, including UNRWA students, for the sole purpose of inciting violence and thus distracting the world from Hamas' decade-long control of the Gaza Strip and its detrimental impact on the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in the area. As we have seen in the past months, especially regarding the riots events on the Gaza border, UNRWA public statements clearly indicate its growing leniency towards advocacy in the service of Hamas, rather than focusing on relief and humanitarian assistance in the best interest of the Palestinian people in Gaza. By doing so, UNRWA only exacerbates the unnecessary human suffering of innocent Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Despite the acute security threats, Israel is actively working to support reconstruction efforts in the Gaza Strip. The United Nations-backed Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism has enabled, since October 2014, the entrance of over 10.33 million tons of various types of construction materials into the Gaza Strip, of them 3.28 million tons during 2017 alone. As of December 2017, 127,187 damaged housing units had been renovated out of a total of 130,000. More than 19,262 new housing units are in advanced stages of construction, while hundreds are ready for occupancy. Hundreds of public projects, including schools, clinics, mosques and parks, have been completed or are near completion. Delays in reconstruction stem predominantly from the actions of Hamas and its conflict with the Palestinian Authority, including the latter's decision to keep suspending payments for salaries in Gaza, and a lack of international funding for the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. It is important to note

that Israel is committed to enabling the delivery of humanitarian assistance and continues to provide electrical power and water, as well as the entry of goods for the people of Gaza.

In conclusion, Israel would like to re-emphasize Prime Minister Netanyahu's stance vis-à-vis UNRWA, which calls for a gradual shifting of its support funds to UNHCR, while defining clear criteria as to who is a "genuine refugee" and who is a "fictitious refugee". However, until this vision is put into practice, UNRWA and its workers must keep high standards of impartiality, as expected from all United Nations employees. UNRWA must return to its original mandate as a relief and humanitarian agency, instead of distorting facts and presenting them in one-sided reports and statements that only heighten tensions between the parties.

Japan

[Original: English]
[30 June 2018]

The Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, with reference to the latter's note verbale dated 4 May 2018, has the honour to inform him of the following actions taken by the Government of Japan in the implementation of the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 72/81, with regard to UNRWA.

Financial contribution

Description	*Amount*	*Disbursement date*
Supplementary budget	US$ 23 509 061	19 March
Core contribution	US$ 1 679 758	25 April
Food assistance	¥600 000 000 (US$ 5 357 143)	–
Emergency grant aid	US$ 10 000 000	19 June

Contribution to expand/diversify donor-base

Japan initiated the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian countries for Palestinian Development, which is a regional conference to discuss assistance to Palestine by utilizing the resources and experiences of economic development of East Asian countries.

The Senior Officials' Meeting and the Ministerial-level Meeting were organized in May and June 2018, respectively. In these meetings, individual sessions dedicated to UNRWA were set up in order for UNRWA to reach out to Asian countries and further expand/diversify its donor base.

New Zealand

[Original: English]
[21 May 2018]

The Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General and has the honour to refer to his letter dated 4 May 2018 concerning his reporting responsibility under paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 72/81 and paragraph 6 of Assembly resolution 72/83, under the agenda item "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East".

The Permanent Mission of New Zealand is pleased to inform the Secretary-General that New Zealand made an early payment of its annual $NZ 1 million contribution to UNRWA in March 2018. It is also pleased to inform the Secretary-General that it made an additional, US$ 1 million contribution to UNRWA as part of its 2018 emergency appeals, as announced at the UNRWA Extraordinary Ministerial Conference, held in Rome in March 2018.

Portugal

[Original: English]
[29 June 2018]

The Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and has the honour to refer to the Department's communication dated 4 May 2018 concerning the request for information on measures taken in the implementation of the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions 72/80, 72/81, 72/82 and 72/83 adopted under agenda item 53, on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

The Permanent Mission has the honour to report the actions below taken by Portugal to implement the provisions contained in the aforementioned resolutions to aid and assist Palestine refugees and support the operations of UNRWA.

In 2017, in addition to an annual voluntary contribution of US$ 20,000, Portugal disbursed an additional contribution of €100,000.

In 2018, Portugal has made an advance disbursement of the same annual voluntary contribution (US$ 20,000) and, in response to the calls of the Secretary-General to support UNRWA in overcoming the current financial crisis, has disbursed an additional contribution of €50,000.

Turkey

[Original: English]
[6 July 2018]

The Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations and, with reference to the note verbale dated 4 May 2018, has the honour to transmit herewith the contribution of Turkey for the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Turkey considers UNRWA a vital actor for the continued well-being of more than 5 million Palestinian refugees. Its operations and services are also essential for the national security and welfare of the host countries, making it an important factor for stability in this volatile region.

Turkey, together with Switzerland, has played an instrumental role in the development of the March 2017 report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, in which he called upon all concerned parties to come together and secure the Agency's financial future.

In 2017, Turkey assumed the Vice Chairmanship of the UNRWA Advisory Commission and, as of 1 July 2018, took over the Chairmanship, adding a new dimension to its relations with the Agency.

Following the reduction of the contributions to the UNRWA budget, the Agency's ability to continue to cater to the vital needs of Palestinians has been more precarious than ever.

It is clear that these additional restrictions to the Agency's budget will have a negative impact on the lives of Palestinian refugees and hamper the efforts towards a two-State political solution and regional stability.

Turkey had advanced and transferred its annual contribution of US$ 1.5 million.

At the UNRWA Extraordinary Ministerial Conference in Rome, Turkey announced and disbursed an additional US$ 10 million.

Turkey also granted US$ 1.2 million to the World Health Organization for the treatment of wounded Palestinians.

Turkey launched a national donation mobilization for Palestine refugees to support the UNRWA "Dignity is Priceless" campaign.

Turkey has also increased its yearly flour contributions to 26 thousand tons and distributed it through the Agency.

In coping with the Agency's financial shortcomings, it would be highly beneficial to set up mechanisms that would allow for continuous and sustainable modes of financing. One such mechanism is the Waqf Fund to help Palestinian Refugees that is planned to be made operational under the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). Turkey welcomes the decision to establish the said fund which was incorporated in the final communiqué of the Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), held in Istanbul on 18 May 2018.

During its Chairmanship of the UNRWA Advisory Commission, in coordination with the UNRWA Secretariat, Turkey would like to place special emphasis on the recommendations of the Secretary-General mentioned in his report of March 2017.

United Arab Emirates

[Original: English]
[21 June 2018]

The present report follows the implementation by the United Arab Emirates of General Assembly resolutions 72/80, 72/81, 72/82 and 72/83, with a focus on the following recommendations:

- Increased assistance to Palestinian refugees
- Strengthened efforts to meet the anticipated needs of the Agency, including with regard to increased expenditures and needs arising from conflicts and instability in the region and the serious socioeconomic and humanitarian situation
- Increased special allocations by Member States to Palestine refugees for higher education grants and scholarships
- Maximized use of resources and reduced funding shortfalls, especially in the Agency's programme budget, which is funded primarily by voluntary contributions from Member States and intergovernmental organizations, and which faces persistent shortfalls that are increasingly threatening the delivery of the Agency's core programmes of assistance to Palestine refugees

Earmarked voluntary contributions

The United Arab Emirates one of highest donors to UNRWA and its programmes, with a contribution of US$ 1,800,000 and US$ 800,000 towards the general operational budget of UNRWA programmes.

Humanitarian contributions to the Agency across its various sectors

The contributions of United Arab Emirates to UNRWA during 2013–2018 amounted to US$ 96,417,291, that were distributed as follows:

- **Palestine**: The United Arab Emirates provided foreign aid to UNRWA in the amount of US$ 76,561,232, that included emergency food assistance to Palestinian refugees, as well as support for education, commodity assistance, medical assistance, social services and civil development
- **Syrian Arab Republic**: The United Arab Emirates provided US$ 15,402,940 in foreign aid to UNRWA, which included emergency food assistance to Palestinians in the Syrian Arab Republic
- **Education**: The United Arab Emirates contributed US$ 15,000,000 to cover the UNRWA budget deficit and cover the needs of the education sector in the Gaza Strip for the academic year 2015/16. It also provided the same amount for the academic year 2016/17. As for the academic year 2017/18, the United Arab Emirates earmarked US$ 11,000,000.

Financial stability of the agency

General Assembly resolution 71/93, which in its draft had been co-sponsored by the State of Palestine, urged relevant entities to explore all potential ways and means, including through voluntary and assessed contributions, to ensure that the Agency's funding is sufficient, predictable and sustained for the duration of its mandate. The resolution also included a proposal for Member States to increase their voluntary contributions to the Agency's programme budget to a level, in percentage terms, that is at least equivalent to the percentage that they contribute to the United Nations regular budget.

This will require the approval of States in supporting the aforementioned draft resolution which will entail an annual financial contribution that is higher than usual.

Position of the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates is supportive of the aforementioned draft resolution.

State of Palestine

[Original: English]
[13 July 2018]

The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and has the honour to refer to the note regarding the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its seventy-second session under the agenda item "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East". The present note conveys the positions of the Government of the State of Palestine regarding the adoption and implementation of these important resolutions in this critical period being endured by both the Palestine refugees and UNRWA.

As we mark this year the seventieth anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba of 1948 and the passage of 51 years since the onset of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip in 1967, the question of the Palestine refugees and displaced persons remains among the highest priorities for the State of Palestine and continues to constitute one of the core issues that must be justly resolved, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, in order to achieve a peaceful and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine in its all aspects.

The Palestine refugees, more than 5.4 million of whom are registered with UNRWA, have been denied their rights for more than seven decades, foremost the denial of their right to return to live in peace in their homes and to just compensation, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948. As Israel continues to deny and obstruct the realization of these rights, the Palestine refugees, including men, women and children across nearly four generations, have been forced to continue to endure exile, dispossession, dispersion, hardships and marginalization. Their plight has been severely exacerbated in the recent period by recurrent violence, crises and deteriorating humanitarian conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly the Gaza Strip, as well as by regional instability, particularly the ongoing devastating conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, with its serious impact on Jordan and Lebanon and the Palestine refugee communities in those host countries.

The continued failure of the international community to end their plight, based on international legitimacy, central to which are resolution 194 (III) and all subsequent relevant resolutions, has seriously compounded the vulnerability and the suffering and indignities being endured by the Palestine refugees, leaving them at this moment in great despair, with little hope for a better future, and with a greater reliance on UNRWA, as a main provider of relief, protection and human development assistance.

The absence of a just solution has made the annual adoption of General Assembly resolutions under an agenda item on UNRWA — which include resolutions 72/80 on assistance to Palestine refugees, 72/81 on persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities, 72/82 on operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and 72/83 on Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues — even more necessary and indispensable. Pending a just solution, it remains imperative that the Assembly reaffirm the rights and fundamental principles pertaining to the question of Palestine refugees, as well as authorize the provision of humanitarian assistance and emergency relief support to the Palestine refugees in all fields of operation in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in order to ensure their well-being, protection and human development. In this regard, the mandate of UNRWA and the strong, long-standing international support for the Agency, in recognition of its vital services to Palestine refugees and its tangible contribution to regional stability, remain equally indispensable.

As conflicts and political instabilities intensify and spread, straining economies and social systems in our region and deepening human insecurity, the Palestine refugee population is particularly affected and is faced by unprecedented challenges that require the international community to scale up humanitarian aid to meet the immediate needs of Palestine refugees, including children and young people, to avoid an even more dangerous deterioration of the situation. Addressing the severe financial crisis of UNRWA by providing immediate funding to remedy the immense shortfall and also providing more sufficient and predictable support to the Agency's mandate, is a matter of urgency in order to ensure the continuity of its education, health, relief and emergency programmes and avert any suspension of such assistance, which

would have a disruptive and far-reaching impact, undermining both the situation of Palestine refugees and the stability of their host countries.

In this regard, we must highlight the ever-worsening plight of the refugee population in the Gaza Strip, now numbering approximately 1.3 million people, particularly as a result of the dire humanitarian crisis that has prevailed there for a decade and the constant decline of socioeconomic conditions due to the ongoing occupation, illegal blockade and repeated devastating military aggressions of Israel. This acute humanitarian situation has inflicted immense pressure on an already fragile civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and schools and severely depleted resources, and caused unprecedented loss of livelihood, unemployment and poverty, with increased food insecurity and aid dependency among nearly the entire population of the Gaza Strip, mostly affecting refugee families. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the refugee community, particularly Bedouins, are disproportionately affected by the violence and oppressive and illegal policies and practices of the Israeli occupation, including its persistent policy of forced displacement and transfer of civilians, especially in relation to its illegal settlement activities, as well as the demolition of homes and destruction of livelihood, making Palestine refugee families more vulnerable, with rising needs.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, the impact of the catastrophic conflict there on Palestine refugees has been grave. Many have been displaced within the Syrian Arab Republic after the destruction of their camps, while thousands have fled to neighbouring countries in search of safety, particularly Lebanon and Jordan. As reflected in recent reports, at least 95 per cent of the Palestine refugee population in the Syrian Arab Republic has become dependent on UNRWA for subsistence since the advent of the conflict in 2011. In Lebanon, the most vulnerable of the Palestine refugees, among them those that have fled the Syrian Arab Republic, continue to struggle with abject poverty, insecurity, marginalization and lack of opportunity. While the situation of Palestine refugees in Jordan remained stable, pressures stemming from the influx of refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic and negative socioeconomic conditions are straining the ability to meet the basic needs of refugee families, deepening anxiety and uncertainty among the population.

Against this backdrop of rising tensions, instability and needs, it is imperative that the international community continue to advocate for the rights of the Palestine refugees, to support the mandate of UNRWA and its uninterrupted provision of services in all fields of operation, and to ensure a dignified life for them and their families. UNRWA assistance is crucial for their protection and social resilience, which is essential for the stability of these communities and their host countries, which is equally essential for preserving the prospects for peace and fostering its realization. Since the commencement of its operations in 1950, the Agency has played this crucial, indispensable role, providing education, health, relief and social services and emergency assistance to the Palestine refugees, alleviating their suffering and strengthening their resilience, and it is vital that this role is sustained during these critical times.

Along with its core education, health and relief and social programmes, which have immeasurably benefitted the Palestine refugees, serving as a lifeline for the most vulnerable and abject poor among them, the Agency has also contributed significantly to the human development of the refugee population, ensuring their ability to be productive members of their communities, society and host countries. Among the key services in this regard have been the provision of vocational training, sports and recreation, microfinance and micro-enterprise capacity-building, particularly for young people and women, as well as promoting economic development and self-reliance, mainstreaming gender equality and providing psychosocial support and counselling. Today's realities make such a hybrid humanitarian and development

mission much more needed, and it is imperative for the international community to provide the Agency with the needed political and financial support that ensures the continuity of the Agency's operations across all fields of operations, in line with all relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolutions 72/80, 72/81, 72/82 and 72/83.

The Government of the State of Palestine remains committed to providing every necessary facilitation and support for UNRWA to be able to fully implement its mandate, as per General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 and all subsequent resolutions through to those adopted most recent by the Assembly at its seventy-second session. It is the firm position of the Government that such support is vital for ameliorating the living conditions of the Palestine refugees, pending the achievement of a just solution for their plight, on the basis of resolution 194 (III) and the Arab Peace Initiative. Moreover, it remains insistent, in its advocacy on behalf of the Palestine refugees and their rights, that such a just solution is absolutely essential for ultimately achieving a just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine as a whole and lasting Palestinian-Israeli peace.

The Palestinian Government, represented by Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, is very keen to continue its regular consultation with the Commissioner-General of UNRWA with a view to addressing the operational concerns and challenges facing the Palestine refugee community as well as the Agency in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to ensure the proper coordination with the Directors of Operations in the West Bank and Gaza. Equally, the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations stands ready to continue it constant cooperation with the UNRWA Representative Office in New York on all of these important matters and to ensure the necessary legislation in the General Assembly to address the needs and challenges faced by the Agency in the implementation of its mandate and to ensure the necessary support, including through advocacy and outreach, to redress the unprecedented financial crisis being faced by UNRWA.

In addition, the Palestine Liberation Organization Department of Refugee Affairs continues to work with relevant stakeholders, including with donors, host countries and members and observers of the Advisory Commission, in order to maintain international and regional firm support for the rights of the Palestine refugees and for the mandate and operations of UNRWA. It is responsible for the coordination with the host countries to ensure unity of positions on the Palestine refugee question and to support the implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions within the framework of the League of Arab States and OIC.

In this connection, the State of Palestine continues to appeal for support to UNRWA at the United Nations, whether at the General Assembly or the Security Council, as well as in different platforms and international forums, including within the framework of the Arab Group, the Group of 77 and China, OIC, and the Non-Aligned Movement. Palestine has also actively engaged in successive ministerial meetings in support of UNRWA, including the most recent meetings, namely its Extraordinary Ministerial Conference held in Rome on 15 March 2018, the Pledging Conference held in New York on 25 June 2018 and the third Ministerial Meeting of the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development, held in Bangkok on 27 June 2018.

Furthermore, the State of Palestine continues to exert efforts with concerned partners to follow-up on the March 2017 report of the Secretary-General on UNRWA (A/71/849) and the recommendations made therein towards securing more sufficient, sustainable and predictable funding for the Agency, as called for by the General Assembly. Despite the regrettable inability to achieve progress towards a larger

assessed contribution to UNRWA to cover essential operating costs beyond international staff, Palestine has worked cooperatively with all concerned Member States and with the Agency to advocate and mobilize efforts with regard to other actionable recommendations. This has been reflected in the relevant provisions of resolution 72/82, on the operations of UNRWA, which was again adopted by an overwhelming majority.

In the implementation of these provisions, Palestine has actively engaged with OIC and its Member States, including during the forty-fourth session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in July 2017, to foster the necessary support for the adoption of a decision regarding the establishment of a fund — waqf — to support Palestine refugees, with UNRWA as the implementing partner, and requesting IDB to prepare a study in this regard. The IDB proposal, issued in March 2018, was welcomed by the most recent OIC Council of Foreign Ministers at its forty-fifth session, held in Dhaka in May 2018, and the establishment of the waqf was decisively called for during by the Extraordinary Summit of OIC, held in Turkey on 14 May 2018.

The State of Palestine will continue all efforts to follow up on this important matter with OIC as a partner, and will also continue to exert all efforts to help the Agency close the funding shortfall it faces. Here, we must note both the enormity of the financial deficit due to the decision of the United States in January 2018 to dramatically reduce its voluntary contribution by US$ 300 million and the enormity of the destabilizing impact this has had and devastating consequences if the current funding gap cannot be closed to ensure the continuity of UNRWA services. This crisis serves as a stark reminder that the only permanent and sustainable solution for the Palestine refugee question is a political one, by which their rights can be ensured, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 194 (III).

Until the achievement of such a just solution, the plight of the Palestine refugees will tragically continue to demand international attention and compassion. Thus, the annual General Assembly resolutions under the agenda item on UNRWA remain relevant and must once again be considered during the seventy-third session of the Assembly, and their implementation must be firmly supported and actively pursued, as a contribution to ensuring the well-being, dignity and humanity of the Palestine refugees, as a contribution towards regional stability, and as a genuine contribution towards the ultimate achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace of the question of Palestine, which is vital for peace in the Middle East, as per the longstanding international consensus.